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Delivering quality care

The recent state review of Sullivan County Health Care in Unity gives residents and officials another source of information to evaluate the current state of the county-owned nursing home.

The survey showed improvement over the previous year, when health and human service officials reported improperly administered medication and other safety issues.

This year, out-dated locks in some areas of the facility were probably the most serious issue.

The state survey, which certifies the facility to receive Medicare and Medicaid payments, is a snapshot, albeit a highly detailed one. It is a generally accepted measure of whether a nursing home is following regulations and properly caring for patients.

This year's strong survey is the result of hard work by employees and reflects well on the quality of care being given to residents. It also reflects well on the performance of Genesis, the private partner that manages the place.

The survey should be one of the factors Sullivan County Commissioners use as they try to determine the future management structure of the facility. One of the charges critics of the current arrangement make is that too much emphasis is given to the bottom line.

The survey would suggest otherwise. The nursing home was running deficits in the hundreds of thousands of dollars every year before Genesis arrived. The shortfall was covered with taxpayer dollars. Since Genesis, the facility is self-sustaining and tax dollars can go to the intended accounts.

The recent survey gives a good indicator that this fiscal efficiency has not come at the expense of patients. It doesn't guarantee every patient has received or will receive perfect care, but the employees at Sullivan County Health are certainly trying.

It also sets a high standard for whatever management structure the commissioners would install post Genesis. This past year shows that the county home, the nursing home that belongs to the people, can operate in a cost-effective manner and provide quality care.

Whatever comes next, whether it's more Genesis, a collection of different consultants or a complete reversion back to an all-county employee site, expectations will be high.